

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PARIS 01944 231637Z

62

ACTION EUR-12

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BEIRUT PASS BAGHDAD

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: TECH, TGEN

SUBJECT: IRAQI INTEREST IN BUYING FRENCH NATURAL
URANIUM POWER REACTOR

1. THE IRAQIS ARE DISCUSSING WITH THE FRENCH
NUCLEAR AGENCY THE POSSIBILITY OF BUYING A 500-
MEGAWATT (ELECTRIC) NUCLEAR POWER STATION. THE
INTERESTING ASPECT IS THAT THE IRAQIS ARE CON-
SIDERING THE GAS GRAPHITE NATURAL URANIUM REACTOR
DESIGN, ABANDONED BY THE FRENCH IN
1970 IN FAVOR OF U.S. LIGHT WATER DESIGNS, USING
ENRICHED URANIUM FUEL. MFA NUCLEAR AFFAIRS
DIRECTOR ALLINE SAID THE DISCUSSIONS HAVE BEEN
GOING ON FOR SEVERAL MONTHS BUT ARE STILL AT
A "PRELIMINARY" STAGE. HE VOLUNTEERED THAT THE
IRAQI PREFERENCE FOR THE GAS GRAPHITE REACTOR
OWED TO THEIR DESIRE TO BE INDEPENDENT OF FOREIGN
SOURCES OF ENRICHMENT.

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PAGE 02 PARIS 01944 231637Z

2. FRANCE HAS BUILT FIVE GAS GRAPHITE NATURAL URANIUM REACTOR POWER STATIONS WITH A CAPACITY EACH OF ABOUT 500 MEGAWATTS (ELECTRIC). ONE OF THESE IS LOCATED IN VANDELLOS, SPAIN, NEAR THE FRENCH BORDER. THE LAST TO BE PUT UNDER CONSTRUCTION (ST. LAURENT II), IN 1966, WAS COMPLETED IN 1972.

3. COMMENT: GIVEN THIS TIME LAPSE, THE COST OF BUILDING JUST ONE GAS GRAPHITE REACTOR WOULD PROBABLY BE ASTRONOMICAL. AS LE MONDE COMMENTED, ENGINEERING TEAMS WOULD HAVE TO BE RECONSTITUTED, INDUSTRIAL CAPACITY REBUILT, PROBABLY NOT TO BE RE-USED UNLESS OF COURSE THE FRENCH COULD FIND OTHER BUYERS. PERHAPS MORE IMPORTANT FOR U.S. INTERESTS IS THE EVENTUAL QUESTION OF SAFEGUARDS. THE FRENCH DO NOT HAVE INTERNATIONAL SAFEGUARDS ON THE REACTOR THEY BUILT IN VANDELLOS, SPAIN. THEY CLAIM THAT GIVEN THE CONTINUING PRESENCE OF FRENCH TECHNICIANS AND THE REPROCESSING IN FRANCE OF SPENT FUEL, THERE IS LITTLE POSSIBILITY OF AN UNDETECTED DIVERSION OF PLUTINIUM.
RUSH

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